

Message Text

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INFO AMEMBASSY LISBON

AMEMBASSY KINSHASA

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AMEMBASSY LIBREVILLE

AMEMBASSY LONDON

AMEMBASSY PARIS

CINCLANT FOR POLAD

USCINCEUR FOR POLAD

AMEMBASSY LUSAKA

AMEMBASSY PRETORIA

C O N F I D E N T I A L LUANDA 1108

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT MILI AO

SUBJECT: STATUS REPORT ON CABINDA

SUMMARY: MPLA IS FIRMLY ENTRENCHED IN CABINDA CITY WHILE FLEC IS ACTIVE ON SOUTHERN BORDER WITH 1000 TROOPS. PORTUGUESE ARMY PULLING OUT A BATTALION OF PREDOMINANTLY ANGOLAN TROOPS. FLEC IN CONGO (B) MAY HAVE CAPTURED TWENTY MPLA TROOPS. END SUMMARY

1. DURING A VISIT TO CABINDA ON DECEMBER 18 A CONGEN OFFICER SPOKE WITH THE GOVERNOR OF THE DISTRICT AND OBSERVED THE LOCAL SECURITY SITUATION. THE GOVERNOR SAID THAT MPLA IS WELL ENTRENCHED IN THE NORTHERN HALF OF THE DISTRICT, ABOVE THE CHILUANGO RIVER, AND HAS SMALL DELEGATIONS IN ALL SIZEABLE SETTLEMENTS THERE. IT ALSO HAS OFFICES IN CABINDA CITY AND TWO VILLAGES SOUTH OF THE RIVER. THE IOMBE TRIBE, WHO PREDOMINATE NORTH OF THE RIVER AND COMPRISE

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ABOUT ONE-HALF OF THE ENCLAVE'S POPULATION, ARE SAID TO BE PRO-

MPLA. MPLA HAS ONLY 600-700 TROOPS IN THE ENCLAVE AND NEARBY AREAS OF CONGO (B). WHILE WELL ARMED AND TRAINED THESE TROOPS ARE THINLY SPREAD. THERE ARE ABOUT 40 MPLA SOLDIERS IN CABINDA CITY PROVIDING SECURITY TO THEIR HEADQUARTERS AND OCCASSIONALLY ASSISTING THE PORTUGUESE ARMY WITH PATROLS AND ROADBLOCKS. THE GOVERNOR SAID THERE WERE VERY GOOD RELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN THE ARMY AND MPLA.

2. FLEC: THE GOVERNOR SAID FLEC IS VERY ACTIVE POLITICALLY AND MILITARILY IN THE SOUTHERN HALF OF THE DISTRICT, PARTICULARLY ALONG THE ZAIRIAN FRONTIER. HE ESTIMATED FLEC STRENGTH AT 1000 ARMED MEN IN THE SOUTH AND 200-300 IN THE NORTH, INSIDE CONGO (B). THEIR BACKBONE ARE THE 350 SPECIAL TROOPS (BLACK CABINDIANS) WHO HAVE LEFT THE PORTUGUESE ARMY AND DEFECTED TO FLEC. PORTUGUESE ARMY INTELLIGENCE FEELS FLEC IS EXPERIENCING SHORTAGES OF FOOD AND THERE ARE REPORTS OF SOME FLEC TROOPS DESERTING THEIR UNITS. THE GOVERNOR SAID FLEC'S MAIN SUPPORT COMES FROM THE BAOIOS AND BACONGO TRIBES WHO POPULATE THE AREA SOUTH OF THE CHILUANGO RIVER, AS WELL AS FROM SOME SETTLEMENTS NORTH OF THE RIVER ALONG THE ZAIRIAN FRONTIER. THERE ARE DISCREET POLITICAL CONTACTS BETWEEN THE GOVERNOR AND SOME MIDDLE LEVEL FLEC FOLLOWERS WHO DID NOT FLEE AFTER THE PARTY WAS CLOSED IN NOVEMBER. THE GOVERNOR INSISTS THAT FLEC WILL NOT BE ALLOWED TO FUNCTION AS A POLITICAL PARTY UNTIL IT AGREES TO LAY DOWN ITS WEAPONS.

3. TROOP LEVELS: ONE PORTUGUESE BATTALION, COMPRISED MAINLY OF ANGOLAN TROOPS, IS BEING WITHDRAWN FROM THE TERRITORY, LEAVING FOUR IN THE ENCLAVE. THE BATTALION GARRISONING THE MPLA DOMINATED NORTHERN REGION, AROUND BUCO ZAU AND BELIZE, IS TO BE REPLACED BY A FRESH UNIT FROM PORTUGAL. THE ARTILLERY AND HEAVY ENGINEER COMPANIES MOVED INTO CABINDA IN NOVEMBER OF 1973 DURING THE SCARE OVER AN FNLA-ZAIRIAN INVASION ARE ALSO NOW BEING WITHDRAWN. THESE LAST TWO FACTS HAVE GIVEN RISE TO RUMORS IN LUANDA THAT COPCON TROOPS WERE COMING TO CABINDA TO ASSIST AN MPLA TAKE-OVER AND THAT A MASSIVE PORTUGUESE WITHDRAWAL FROM THE ENCLAVE IS UNDERWAY.

4. ON DECEMBER 14 TWENTY MPLA CADRE WERE CAPTURED INSIDE CONGO (B). ACCORDING TO THE GOVERNOR THEY WERE ON A POLITICAL AND PSYCHOLOGICAL MISSION IN THE AREA OF MASSABI WHEN THEY WANDERED ACROSS THE

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FRONTIER. HE WAS EVASIVE ON THE QUESTION OF WHETHER FLEC OR THE CONGOLESE ARMY CAPTURED THE CADRE, BUT RUMORS IN CABINDA CITY SAY FLEC IS RESPONSIBLE. THEY HAVE NOT YET BEEN RELEASED.

5. THE GOVERNOR FEELS THAT THE CONGO (B) IS PLAYING A DOUBLE OR TRIPLE GAME WITH FLEC, MPLA AND THE PORTUGUESE. HE SAID THE CONGOLESE HAVE SET ASIDE SEPERATE ZONES FOR BOTH MPLA AND FLEC TO OPERATE FROM INSIDE THEIR TERRITORY. HE EXPRESSED SATISFACTION

THAT THE SEVENTEEN PORTUGUESE SOLDIERS DETAINED IN THE CONGO
SINCE THE MASSABI INCIDENT OF EARLY NOVEMBER HAVE BEEN RELEASED.
(THEY ARRIVED IN LUANDA ON DECEMBER 18.)

6. CABINDA CITY IS CALM. MPLA TROOPS WERE NOT IN EVIDENCE EXCEPT
AT THEIR HEADQUARTERS. NO MPLA TROOPS WERE SEEN ASSISTING PORTUGUESE
TROOPS ON SECURITY MISSIONS. THE TWO BATTALIONS OF PORTUGUESE
ARMY TROOPS IN THE CITY ARE ADEQUATE TO MAINTAIN ORDER AS LONG AS
THEY HAVE THE WILL TO DO SO. FLEC IS NOT UP TO TAKING ON THE
ARMY AND MPLA NOW, BUT IT IS A MILITARY FORCE TO BE RECKONED
WITH IF IT OPTS FOR HIT AND RUN OR GUERILLA WARFARE.
KILLORAN

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